

Thank you!

A warm thank you is due to all SURJ members who have generously donated to SURJ during our 2005-2006 Annual Appeals drive. Support from our members is crucial if we are to continue in our struggle. If you have not yet contributed to SURJ, please consider doing so. While SURJ has made great progress in the last five years—much more remains to be done.

We would also like to express our appreciation to these corporate and organizational donors who have generously contributed to SURJ this year.

- Bernardon Haber Holloway Architects PC
- Good Samaritan Foundation
- Lifer's Group at Sussex Correctional Institution
- National Alliance of Social Workers
- NKS Distributors
- Wilmington Trust
- Women's Alliance of the First Unitarian Church
- WSFS

SURJ 2005-2006 Membership Contribution

Yes, I/We would like to support SURJ and its mission with a contribution of:

[] \$250 [] \$50 [] \$ [] [] (other)
[] \$100 [] \$25

Please make check payable to Stand Up for what's Right and Just.

All contributions are tax deductible.

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100 West 10th Street, Suite 615 Wilmington, DE 19801
Phone: 302-426-9252 Fax: 302-426-9251 www.surj.org
Executive Director: Stephanie J. Symons, Esq.
Board Chair: Dale E. Wolf
Editor/Writer: Stephanie Symons and Dana Sorenson
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Read On About

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In The News

HOUSE BILL 181 – SURJ needs your help!

Passage of House Bill 181, the bill which would fully repeal Delaware's mandatory minimum drug sentencing laws, continues to be SURJ's #1 priority. Since the Legislative Session of the 143rd General Assembly resumed in January, SURJ has worked hard to bring House Bill 181 up for a vote in the House of Representatives. As you may recall, House Bill 181 was voted unanimously out of committee last June. Although over half of the legislature has signed on as co-sponsors of the bill and more than three dozen community and faith-based organizations have voiced their support for the passage of this bill, HB 181 still has not been brought up for a vote.

We need you to take action on House Bill 181! Contact your legislators and let them know that you support the passage of this crucial piece of legislation. Even if your legislator is a sponsor or co-sponsor of the bill, it is still important that they hear from you. Please thank them for their support and let them know that now is the time to vote on and pass House Bill 181. To find out who your legislators are, visit our website at www.surj.org, or contact the SURJ office (E-mail: info@surj.org; Phone: 302-426-9252).

HB 181 Sponsors: Rep. DiPinto, Sens. McDowell and Sorenson

HB 181 Co-sponsors: Reps. Cathcart, Ennis, George-Marshall, Gilligan, Fallon, Hall-Long, Hudson, Johnson, Keeley, Lavelle, Lofink, Longhurst, Maier, McWilliams, Miro, Mulrooney, Oberle, Plant, Schooley, Spence, Stone, VanSant, Viola, Wagner; Sens. Bunting, Cloutier, Copeland, Henry, Peterson, Simpson, Sokola.

Why do we need to repeal mandatory minimum drug sentencing laws in Delaware?

- This bill would return to judges the discretion to tailor sentences to individuals according to the offender's role in the offense, the seriousness of the offense, and the potential for rehabilitation.
- One-size-fits-all mandatory minimum drug sentences are inaccurate and risk adding to our already bloated incarcerated population.
- These laws are expensive:
 - Delaware spends more, per capita, on corrections expenditures than any other state and has one of the highest incarceration rates in the country;
 - Each inmate costs Delaware taxpayers \$26,000 a year; and
 - Alternatives to incarceration, such as drug treatment, would be more cost-effective.
- These laws are ineffective:
 - There is no evidence to show that these drug laws deter individuals from drug crimes.
- These laws are unjust:
 - They transfer sentencing authority from an objective, neutral judge with all the facts of the case to an adversarial prosecutor, who may not have all the facts, which opens the door to injustice through the use of plea-bargaining.

Visions of Justice VII: *Girl Trouble*

More than 100 people came together for the seventh annual Visions of Justice forum on April 21, 2006 at University of Delaware's Clayton Hall. This event, co-sponsored by SURJ, the Delaware Center for Justice, the League of Women Voters, and the Delaware Coalition Against Domestic Violence featured the award-winning documentary, *Girl Trouble*. The film details the lives of three girls caught up in San Francisco's juvenile justice system and demonstrates the difficulty the girls have "getting out of the system." (For more information about the film visit: www.girltrouble.org.)

Co-producer and director, Lexi Leban, introduced the film. After volunteering with the Center for Young Women's Development in San Francisco, she decided to film a year in the life of three of the girls she met at the center. After four years of filming, *Girl Trouble* was completed in 2004. Since its introduction, the film has won numerous awards and has been used as a vehicle for public education about girls in the juvenile justice system.

After the film, a panel of distinguished Delaware speakers discussed how the film related to the experiences of girls in Delaware and stressed the need for gender-specific programming in Delaware's juvenile justice system. The panel included: The Honorable Chandlee J. Kuhn, Chief Judge of Family Court; Nancy Pearsall, Director of Youth Rehabilitative Services for the Department of Children, Youth and their Families; and, Paulette Sullivan Moore, Policy Coordinator for the Delaware Coalition Against Domestic Violence.



Judge Chandlee Kuhn, Nancy Pearsall and Paulette Sullivan Moore answer questions about girls in Delaware's juvenile justice system after the film.

SURJ Supports Federal Second Chance Act of 2005

On October 27, 2005, the Federal Second Chance Act of 2005 was introduced on the Senate floor. This bill, introduced by Senate Judiciary Chair Arlan Specter (R-PA) along with Senators Joe Biden and Sam Brownback (R-KS), has co-sponsors from across the political spectrum such as Senators Rick Santorum (R-PA) and Barack Obama (D-IL). The Federal Second Chance Act would provide \$100 million in federal competitive grants for re-entry initiatives, would create a federal re-entry taskforce, and establish a national re-entry resource center. There is also a companion piece of legislation in the House that was introduced by Representative Robert Portman (R-OH) on April 19, 2005.

In a letter to the *Washington Post* (2/22/06), Senator Brownback wrote: "Reducing recidivism benefits taxpayers, who must shoulder the burden of rising prison costs. More important, the reduction in crime that comes with reduced recidivism is a great public benefit. We should not be resigned to allowing generation after generation to return to prison because they don't have the tools to break the cycle. The Second Chance Act could help stop this pernicious cycle."

Senator Biden offered this perspective in a news release this fall (10/28/05, www.joebiden.com): "A relatively modest investment in offender reentry

efforts compares very well with the alternative – building more prisons for these ex-offenders to return to if they are unable to successfully reenter their communities."

SURJ supports the Second Chance Act of 2005, and we encourage SURJ members to contact Senator Biden, Senator Carper, and Representative Castle and voice their support for the passage of S. 1934 and H.R. 1704.

SURJ Joins the Delaware Reentry Consortium

Last summer, SURJ was invited to join a group of advocates who were interested in coming together to discuss the plight of the formerly incarcerated in Delaware. What began as a series of brown bag lunches, has grown to become the Delaware Reentry Consortium (DRC).

The goal of the Consortium is to bring together the many organizations that work with the formerly incarcerated and find ways to combine forces and work together. SURJ hopes to provide public education and policy support to this initiative. Other organizations that have joined the DRC include: Delaware Center for Justice, Goodwill Industries, Society of St. Vincent DePaul, Alternatives to Violence Project, New Life Christian Center, Center for Relational Living, Delaware Mentoring Program, Methodist Action Program and Building Bridges, Inc.

An Update on the Delaware Reentry Roundtable

We are pleased to announce that JoAnne Page, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Fortune Society, will be the keynote speaker at the Delaware Reentry Roundtable scheduled for September 29, 2006 at Widener Law School. Located in New York City, the Fortune Society was one of the first non-profit organizations in the country to search for solutions to the problems facing the formerly incarcerated. Run almost entirely by former prisoners the Fortune Society "exists to help prisoners, former prisoners, and those facing jail or prison time." (www.fortunesociety.org)

Help SURJ in Its Outreach Efforts

SURJ needs your help spreading our message. We are available to speak to groups of any size, and are always looking for new events to attend.

Recent SURJ sightings: Dana worked at an information booth at the Episcopal Diocesan convention, and Stephanie spoke at the Delaware Women's Conference and also appeared on Bayard Marin's "Law Doctor" show on WDEL.

Upcoming Events: SURJ staff will be manning a booth at the upcoming Newark Nite event on June 3, 2006. As always, we would appreciate any help from SURJ members who could volunteer their time. Contact Dana (dsorenson@surj.org) for more information.

Stephanie will be addressing the issue of mandatory minimum drug sentencing at Lutheran Day in Dover. Members are encouraged to join us at 10 A.M. in the Senate Hearing Room at Legislative Hall on June 7, 2006.